

11-01-06

Faith for Troubled Times – Trusting God- No Matter What

Happy New Year! Oscar Wilde is quoted as saying “A resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other.” (Quoted by DeWayne Hamby – WWM; 1.1.11)

Habakkuk 3:17-18

*17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,
18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.*

NIV

Illustration of the Farmer who lost his crop due to a hail storm – He stood in the ruined field and praised God – what an example to His son!

How have you handled adversity and calamity in your life?

The prophet Habakkuk pens these words immediately after having received confirmation from God that the Babylonians would surely defeat Israel and Jerusalem and take the people captive. The time for pleading for mercy was over. The Northern tribes were already living out a sentence of defeat and exile at the hands of the Assyrians. After decades of wicked kings, the judgment clause of the God’s covenant with His people kicked in. If you...I will...If you don’t...I will not...I will...

Now the Southern Kingdom (Judah) was in line for her discipline. There were some good kings, but there were also many evil ones and judgment was coming. (Especially Manasseh [52 years reigning and most of them more wicked than Ahab and Jezebel]. He repented late in his reign and despite the reforms of Josiah, his grandson, the people never really changed. Sinful indulgence of idolatry, greed, and selfish injustice were so ingrained in the culture, that it could not be turned despite the pleas of righteous leaders.)

Never forget this: God is a holy and a just God. He is loving and kind, providing means for salvation and blessing. He is also true to His words...He will do what He says he will do. When we forget that and get impatient or begin to think He didn’t REALLY mean He would discipline us or our nation for selfishly rejecting His promises, blessings and demands, we set ourselves up for a terrible surprise when the hammer finally falls.

As the prophet Habakkuk thought of the destruction ahead, he describes his reaction: (Hab 3:16)

“I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.”

He was fearful in his flesh – it affected him physically, but his mind was made up. There is nothing I can do to prevent it, but I can trust God through it. He knew that God’s judgment would be completed on the nation doing the invading! God was using a wicked nation to discipline His people, but ultimately He would punish all evildoers! You see, we are always looking for a way to avoid discomfort – to delay judgment...but there comes a time when we must fix our minds on the Lord’s will and wait in faith and trust for His Word to come to pass.

How WILL you handle adversity and troubled times ahead?

I do not have a particular time of trouble in mind...but it seems to me we may be entering a time of shaking – economically, emotionally, culturally...and most of all, spiritually.

I have told you not to put your only hope in money or government or your own ability to take care of yourselves and your family.

Our hope can be built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness! 2011 will be a turning point for many. They will either surrender fully to God and his will or they will turn away – run in the opposite direction and toward judgment. Even those of us trusting the Lord will feel the effects of this spiritual battle. We will either trust God and win in the end or abandon God’s promises and fall. Perhaps it will come down to a time where we are no longer concerned about such things as our national identity or political party because we are too busy trying to provide for and protect our own families. (I am not a militant and I do not advocate violence or the overthrow of the government)

1. Even our personal faith cannot always prevent the judgment of God on backsliding Nations. Calamity will come. Our prayers and our faith affect the outcome in the lives of people, but certain events and times are predestined by the Lord to complete His plans for planet earth – to judge evil and save the lost. We must learn to live in the tension between a loving God who is pleading with people to repent and receive His promises and a God who will come to judge the earth and those who refuse his salvation through Jesus.

2. We are affected by the troubled times around us even though we may not be responsible for them. But the grace of God sees us through!

3. “Tough times don’t last; tough people do.” (Robert Shuller) – taken in a truly spiritual sense, we are toughest when we are trusting fully in God. *“...for Christ's sake, I delight in*

weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Cor 12:10 NIV)

Note the Prophet’s response again: Hab 3:16-19

16 I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.

17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,

18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

19 The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

NIV

Wait patiently for God is in control. Rejoice in the Lord – be joyful, for He is our SAVIOR! We shall be saved! He is our strength. If we need to flee, He will carry us. If we need to climb to safety (metaphorically or physically speaking), He will enable us...

NOTE: He was so determined to hold on, to wait patiently and rejoice that his whole response was written like a psalm - a song of praise! Not an omen of destruction, but cause to rejoice – a reminder to worship the God who rescues and saves! The God who redeems his people! Who sets things right!

NOW is the time to establish our faith in God. Is there trouble facing you now? Call upon the Lord, wait patiently (with determination) for Him and he will bring you through! Do you fear for the future? Put your trust in the God who sets things right and gives us the strength to endure to victory! Are your plans and dreams being altered by a faltering economy or personal trouble or ...put your trust in God! His plans for us will succeed if we wait and worship – we win in the end. Are you worried about retirement? Trust the God who enables us to climb the heights! or our country totally losing faith – pray, believe, work, but put your trust in GOD’s ultimate wisdom, justice and mercy.

Through faith in God, he can turn our troubles into songs of praise!